

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

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CONFESIONS OF A CARETAKER.

A SERIAL STORY.

BY "RITA."

Author of "Dame Durden," "Darby and Joan,"
"My Lord Conest," etc.

CHAPTER XVI. "MY LADY OF MOODS."

I THOUGHT she would have been very ill after that long fainting-fit; but the next day she seemed almost herself again—pale, languid, and strangely quiet—but more like Mrs. Carruthers of Templecombe than the passionate little fury of the previous night.

Mr. Carruthers was still in London, and I was glad of it; for I hoped that she would be stronger and better by the time he came home from his Parliamentary duties.

She sent for me to her boudoir in the afternoon, and I found her lying down on the wide, deep, Chesterfield couch. Her dark hair was drawn, in its lovely rippling waves, from off her brow, and hung down in a long, loose plait. The pale, delicate pink of her pretty gown set off her clear, dark skin. She looked so young, so sweet, that, for the life of me, I could only look at her in silent admiration.

"Come and sit down, and we will have some tea, Jane," she said. "I can't stand the boys' noise this afternoon, so I sent them off to the nursery. What a perfect day it has been," she added, as she gazed dreamily at the view through the open window.

The sun was setting over the brow of the wood-covered hills. The blue of the sky, the warmth of the air, the notes of a bird's broken song, all seemed to convey the same impression of peace, and rest, and beauty.

She raised herself on one arm, looking at the view as if she had never seen it before.

"I wish," she said, suddenly, "that beautiful things didn't make me so intensely sad; and, somehow—I don't like being sad. When I was a child, Jane, I was such a merry little thing, wasn't I?"

"Yes, Miss Kate," I answered. "And a wicked little thing, too. Lord! the mischief you contrived to get into; the things you'd invent!"

She smiled, a faint little smile, that had no mirth in it, and in which her eyes had no part.

"Jane," she said, "I am going, for the last, last time, just to give myself up to memory. I—I want you to hear how it all happened. Perhaps you will not blame me so much then. I was mad last night; but I am rational and sensible enough today. My heart is quiet; my pulse does not throb. Let us have one more talk together, Jane, and then bury it—and forget."

She lay back again on the cushions. The soft colour came and went in her face.

I poured out some tea and brought her a cup, and she drank it in a mechanical, absent-minded fashion.

"I had better get it over," she said, suddenly. "I have never spoken to any one else. I could not; but you, Jane—well, somehow, you are so different; it is like going back to the old childish days again. I saw how astonished you were that time you came to see me in London, when Reggie brought Mr. Tresyllion in to afternoon tea. Only a month before that we had been strangers. Sometimes I wonder, myself, how we drifted into that cosy, natural intimacy. I can hardly

tell. We seemed to meet everywhere. I suppose he wished it, for he always managed it. And John liked him, and he used often to drop in on Sundays, and the boys were so fond of him, and he had such a way with them—well, you know that, I needn't tell you. And all the time I never dreamt of danger. I thought we were such good friends. My life had been calm and quiet, and it seemed so good to laugh and be happy, and—young, once again; and I always felt that with him. And there was not a word to startle or warn me. I knew he liked to be with me—there was a look in his eyes sometimes—”

Her voice broke. I saw her tremble from head to foot.

“And to think,” she cried, stormily, “to think that it was a lie—a lie—a lie!”

Presently she grew calm, and went on. I thought it best that she should tell her story without interruption.

“I suppose,” she said wearily, “it is never quite safe to be happy. I was happy, unthinkingly, blissfully happy; and I never dreamt of asking myself why. I often wonder what woke me up.”

“Did you wake,” I asked her gently, “before—that afternoon?”

“The night before, I think. We were at a party; he had taken me down to supper. Somehow, it often happened that he did take me down to supper—at parties.”

She stopped abruptly and looked at me, as if the pain of some new thought had struck sharply on her notice.

“To think,” she said in a breathless, frightened way, “to think, Jane, that he will never take me down to supper again; and yet, that all my life, even when I am an old woman—if I live to be one—I shall have to remember those evenings!”

“And this special one?” I asked.

“It was different,” she said, “in some way. There was a subtle, underlying meaning in the words he said, and I did not find it so easy to jest and laugh. What was it he used to call me? ‘My Lady of Moods’? I—I think he wrote a poem on that. He used to quote little bits of it to me just to tease me. I wrote it down once from memory; but I don’t think it is quite right. It was something like this:

What shall I say of her?

All that I may of her,

All that is sad of her—sweet in her—glad in her, Comes to my heart as her name to the lips of me, Wakens and pulses and thrills every thought of me.

Choose what I could of her,
Think what I would of her,
All that is worst of her—all that is good of her,
Sways me and draws me to love every mood of her,
Changefully changeful—My Lady of Moods!”

“It is very pretty,” I said. “No doubt he has written a dozen like it to Mrs. Cray.”

It was cruel; but it pulled her sharp up from her dreaming fancies to reality and common sense.

“Thank you, Jane,” she said. “No doubt you are right. Well, I have nearly done. That night he was quieter, graver than I had known him ever to be. There was something—or I thought there was something—deeper, more regretful in his eyes and voice.

She leant her head back against the cushion and closed her own eyes. Her lips quivered, then set themselves sternly once more.

“I suppose,” she went on presently, “I had flirted. It did not seem easy that night; but I laughed, and teased, and jested as—as I had always done, and, when we left the supper table he began quoting that poem again to tease me; and we went up the stairs and on to the landing, where some seats were. I think there was dancing going on. I remember a waltz strain sounding as he drew me down on to one of the seats with a little imperative gesture. ‘Kate,’ he said; and I was startled and looked at him, and something in his eyes terrified me.

“‘Oh,’ he said in a stifled whisper, ‘if I dared—if I dared—’

“‘Dared what?’ I asked, in some spirit of dare-devilry and recklessness which for the moment had taken possession of me, I think.

“‘Dared misquote one line of that poem,’ he said. ‘But I’m a little bit afraid of “My Lady of Moods,” do you know?’

“‘What,’ I asked, ‘would be the line you would—misquote?’

“I should not have asked. I should not have said it. I—I brought my humiliation on myself. His hand closed on mine. I could hear his heart beat.

“‘It would be this,’ he said, and his voice stole to my ear with the dying strain of the waltz music. ‘Come to my heart as your name to the lips of me.’

“Our eyes met—one quick glance; it said enough—too much. The music ceased and the dancers flocked from the room. I rose, startled, indignant, afraid. That—that was all, Jane.”

"And the next night," I said, "the very next night he was making love to Mrs. Cray."

She sprang up, her eyes and cheeks aflame. "It is good-bye to him now," she cried. "Good-bye to folly, sentiment, blindness, imprudence. I did not mean to be a bad woman, Jane. Heaven knows I did not. I would not deceive my husband knowingly. The drifting was so easy, so pleasant, so safe. But now I am awake; my eyes will never close again on dreams like those."

"I pray to Heaven, not," I cried, and the tears rushed to my own eyes as I looked at her; such a pretty, fragile, little thing, and with her young life tortured and spoilt by a man's selfishness. "Oh, Miss Kate," I said. "Why did you marry—why? I told you love would come. No human fate can defy it. And I knew your nature, your temperament. I knew how passionately and recklessly you could love, if once you let yourself go."

And, oh! the strange, little smile that came to her lips as she wiped her eyes and looked at me.

"But I have not—let myself go," Jane, she said.

CHAPTER XVII. A LAST CONFIDENCE.

WE were silent for a long time then. The sun had set; the air was full of sweet scents from the rose-garden below. I could hear the children's voices laughing out in the stillness.

Perhaps that roused her. I don't know; but she sprang suddenly up, and then stood leaning with one hand against the table. Her face was ghastly.

"Miss Kate!" I cried in terror. "You are ill—you—"

"Hush!" she said. "Don't speak for a moment."

I saw her brows contract. Her hand went to her heart. I could hear its dull, laboured beats, in the silence of the quiet room.

At last she looked up and smiled.

"I was almost foolish enough to give way again," she said. "Jane, if you are ever dreadfully unhappy, and you hear a little child's laugh break across your miserable thoughts, you will know what a heartache is. I thought mine would have broken, just for a moment."

I have many mental pictures in the gallery of my memory; but among them all there is not one so pathetic, so fair, so

infinitely sad, as the picture of that slight young figure, in its trailing draperies of pink, standing outlined against the faint rose light of the sky, with the anguish of her aching heart so bravely repressed, yet speaking out its mute suffering in the quiver of the pale lips, and the agony of the dark, wild eyes.

"It can't be true," she went on, "that I suffer—I—and for a cause so worthless! Haven't I always treated life as a jest, laughed with it, dreamed with it, sung to it, smiled to it, as—as children do? It is very hard, Jane. I did not think such a little thing could hurt so deeply."

"Perhaps," I said, "it will be sooner over."

She drew herself up to her full height. There was something stately, womanly, about the little wild gipsy thing at that moment.

"Yes," she said, "it must be soon over. I never could bear pain; you know that, Jane. Tell me again that I have been deceived, fooled, humiliated. That helps me; that will cure me. I have not lost my power over myself yet. But if we ever meet—"

"Now, Miss Kate," I said, warningly, as I saw the flash of her eyes, the sudden set of the pretty, soft lips into a hardness and fierceness, that robbed them of all beauty.

"I forgot," she said. "I must not be tragic; it is bad form nowadays. None who respect themselves have anything so uncomfortable as feelings."

She began to pace to and fro the pretty, dainty room, her head bent, her hands loosely clasped behind her.

"I must have it out with myself to-day," she said. "Afterwards, it does not matter. I can take up the old life where it dropped. Surely this won't make such a difference. I have enjoyed living for its own sake up to that first evening. Why shouldn't I enjoy it again? My feelings were never deep—just as variable as my nature. Even he said that, and I was a good actress, I think, Jane, for he never suspected that I—cared."

"No," I said. "If you were always as you were that afternoon in Manchester Square, no one would have suspected you had any sentiment in the matter."

"If I did not betray myself then," she said, eagerly, "I am safe. Oh, Jane, if I thought he knew what I feel—what he has made me feel—I should kill myself! I—I could not meet his eyes again."

"Then make yourself happy on that point," I said, "for I watched you keenly and closely enough, and, if anything, you seemed rather too cold and indifferent!"

"Oh, I am glad of that!" she said, breathlessly, "I am glad of that!"

Then she stopped in her restless walk, and came and knelt beside me, just as a child would have done, and laid her pretty, dark head against my shoulder. I always have said, and I say still, I never met Miss Kate's equal for pretty ways; they were just part and parcel of herself.

"Dear old Jane!" she said. "You have been very good to me, and very patient. I wonder," and she lifted her head and pushed back the soft, brown hair, "I wonder, Jane, if it will be very long before I am—happy—again?"

"Heaven forbid, my dear," I cried. "You have everything to make you so."

"I know that," she said—"I know it too well. Every day of my life I have enumerated my blessings. But it is terrible to me—oh, Jane, you can't think how terrible—to feel I can't laugh just for laughing's sake. I can't care about the things that used to please me so, and sunshine, and music, and any story with real feeling in it—they all seem to me so infinitely sadder than even sorrow itself. But it can't last, Jane, can it? It's impossible that it should last!"

"Quite impossible, my dear," I answered her, thrusting back the rich, dusky hair with loving hand as though she were my little charge once more, not a great lady with every good gift of fortune in her keeping.

"Do you know," she said presently, "I believe people like to pose as martyrs, even to themselves. It seems to make life more interesting. Perhaps," and her voice dropped into sudden softness again, "that is the reason why unhappy loves are almost always faithful."

"Oh, my dear," I said, "it is only when we are young that we think so much of happiness. Believe me, it is better to have a little comfort that lasts, than a great joy that is soon over."

"I dare say you are right," she said. "We think and talk a great deal of happiness, and, after all, what is it? Only a question of a little less misery in each life. We dream of it—we never realise it."

"No," I said. "Doubtless it is not meant we should."

"After to-night," she said wearily, "I must not indulge in sentiment. Well," and she laughed bitterly, "there will be

no one to afford me the luxury of confidence. I must keep the children with me; they will help. If only Reggie would not talk so much about—him."

She rose and went back to the couch, and leant her cheek somewhat wearily against the soft cushions.

"It all seems so long ago," she said; "so terribly long ago. Feelings age more than years, do they not, Jane?"

"It seems so strange," she went on, presently, "to feel like this when one has been unmoved and indifferent so long, that one had no fear of—of such a possibility. I had heard the girls at school talk of their loves, and sentimentalise over their emotions. But it always seemed to me that I hadn't any. I couldn't understand it's being in any human being's power to make you happy or—wretched. And my future seemed all so safe and settled, and now—"

A little low sob choked the words, but her eyes were dry and strangely bright.

"I despise him enough, Heaven knows," she said. "Oh, why did he do it? Why? It was so cruel, so heartless, so—"

"So manlike," I said, bitterly.

She dropped her hand and looked at me. "Poor Jane," she said, "you have suffered too. It seems the lot of women, doesn't it?"

"Yes," I said, "it always will be as long as they have anything to do with men."

"You loved your husband and he treated you badly. Your fate is worse than mine. John is so good to me—so good. That is just the one reproach my life is always uttering.

"I think, my dear," I said, "we have talked enough of this for one day. Try and rouse yourself to your old life and duties. It will be hard, but it is better than giving way to morbid fancies and dreams that, after all, can come to nothing."

"Oh, wise old Jane!" she said, with something of the old, bright mockery in glance and voice. "Of course I know you are right. But I am only taking a last indulgence. After to-day—"

Then suddenly her head sank on her clasped hands. The words ended with a sob, like that of a little child over a task that it finds too hard.

"Oh, don't, my dear," I entreated, "don't. I would rather see you mad, furious, passionate, as you were last night, than—this."

"I can't help it, Jane," she said. "I

am weaker than I thought, and this is a new experience; I am not used to it—yet."

So I let her cry. What else could I do, knowing, too, that a woman's tears are at once a safeguard, and an outlet for her feelings; but all the same it wrung my heart to see her, and to hear those wild, terrible, panting sobs that seemed to tear the very life out of her breast, and left her at last spent and exhausted, and utterly helpless, so that I could only lay her back on the couch, and watch her in silent misery as she rested there on the white pillows.

The next day I bade her good-bye. I was obliged to go to my new situation; and somehow, sorry as I was to leave her, I thought it would be better for her to have no one at hand to talk to about this matter.

It would surely wear itself out. She was such a proud, wilful little creature. It was impossible but that she should soon despise and hate a man who had treated her so shamefully as Mr. Tresyllion had done.

And then, all in a moment, like a lightning flash, something seemed to tell me that I had not been quite honest with her when I told her the story of Mrs. Cray. After all, he had not made love; it had been all on the other side. I could not recall a single word of endearment or encouragement on his part.

Mrs. Cray had absolutely flung herself at his head; wooed him desperately, madly. He was young, impulsive, passionate. What could one expect of any man under such circumstances? The very hopelessness of his regard for Miss Kate might have driven him to the desperate remedy of seeking consolation in the arms of another woman. He would not have been the first who had done it.

Still, true or false, the story must be left now to serve its purpose. Better—a million times better—that she should think him worthless, than picture him as loving her, suffering for her, dreaming of her, as she had dreamt of him.

"In a year," I told myself, "it will be all over and forgotten on both sides, and they will be glad of the escape. What could come of it? How would it end? Heaven keep them apart until the madness is conquered."

And it never occurred to me that it could be anything but conquered, or that the fact of conquering could be anything but a question of time for either, or for both.

It seems such a very easy thing to judge of other people, and to settle their affairs for them. But if it is easy, it is not often safe.

OLD KENSINGTON.

KNIGHTS, Barons, and Earls, and the bearers of every other title of dignity—Kings, Queens, and multitudes of Princesses—have passed along this narrow way that leads to Kensington; but who the particular Knight may have been who gave a name to Knightsbridge, there is no evidence to show. But here comes to an end the stately thoroughfare we have followed past the noble dwellings, the fine club houses, the handsome shops of Piccadilly; past the corner thronged with carriages, where "the Duke" is once more in evidence as the presiding genius of the scene; past the park railings, where through a screen of leafless boughs, appears a procession of horsewomen and horsemen, cantering along the ride. Then the grand highway is transformed into two narrow streets, and, at the point where they branch off, appears a cluster of hoarding and temporary buildings which are in strange contrast to the new buildings that are rising in every direction round about. One way leads to Brompton—if there be still a Brompton—happy Bohemian Brompton, the favoured abode of artists, littérateurs, musicians, and actors, but now almost improved off the face of the earth, and converted into vigorous respectability as South Kensington. A little further on, the once jolly, noisy, chaffering Brompton Road becomes the Cromwell Road.

But all this region, although it may be Kensington in a parochial sense, is not the Old Kensington we have in view, so we may even hie back to Knightsbridge and take the other way, where the great mass of the red brick barracks towers overhead. Are the great gates ever thrown back, and do the glittering squadrons ever issue out, with hundreds of iron hoofs thundering noisily under the archway? Presumably, the Guards ride out the other way, for rarely are the big gates open; but a wicket gate in one of the battants frequently is, and lets in or lets out some tall warrior in a scarlet shell, or a young woman with a bundle, or a serjeant's wife with a perambulator or market basket, or other unwarlike figures.

After the straits of Knightsbridge are

past, we are in grandeur once more: the broad highway, lined on one side with the houses of estate and dignity, and on the other with the glades and thickets of park and gardens, with the gilded Albert Memorial glowing from its brilliant shrine. It is the Gore, though why and how the Gore nobody seems to know.

Back in the dark, by Brompton Park,
He turned up through the Gore,

says Gay, in an excellent new ballad to the tune of "Chevy Chase."

And Brompton Park was just behind us, in the district now known as Prince's Gate, where only a faint memory of it is preserved in Park House; but it was the site of perhaps the oldest and most famous nursery-ground in the kingdom, which Addison visited and made copy of for the "Spectator." And Kingston House, close by, is really a fine, old heavy mansion of Queen Anne's days, built by the rather notorious Duchess of Kingston. She married, first, romantically and clandestinely, a well-born but penniless young sailor, and then, prosaically and openly, the rich and elderly Duke of Kingston, who, doting on his young bride, left her all his immense fortune. The penniless sailor, by a marvellous turn of fortune's wheel, became Earl of Bristol, and made a stir about the matter, and there was a grand State trial of the Duchess for bigamy, which resulted in a conviction. But the verdict, which deprived her of her status as Duchess, did not affect her fortune, and my lady Kingston, turning her back upon a country where she had been treated so ungallantly, carried her handsome person and her wealth to foreign parts, where she shone with unabated brilliance.

Always in literary annals the Gore will be noted for Gore House, destroyed in clearing the site for the Albert Hall. It was for long a literary centre, where the Countess of Blessington and her step-son-in-law, Count D'Orsay, the "Admirable Crichton" of his period, kept a hospitable table for littérateurs and dandies, and especially for those who affected to be both one and the other. Louis Napoleon, the future Emperor, was, for long years, one of the intimates at Gore House, and when the establishment finally collapsed in 1849, carried by storm by importunate creditors, the unfortunate pair, neither of whom was adapted to face the stern realities of evil fortune, fled to Paris, where their late guest was now assuming his rôle of "Saviour of Society." Disappointment followed

upon their hopes; there was no share for them of the brightness of the new Empire, and the latter days of the charming Countess and the most accomplished of dandies soon came to an end in the night of poverty and obscurity. Gore House then became a restaurant for the Exhibition of 1851, when Alexis Soyer presided as "cordon bleu."

Ah! what was the scene in the days of that great Exhibition which brought all the world to London, and sent it rolling down the Gore?

Before that date the background of the Gore was a maze of groves, and farms, and market-gardens. Farmers and market-gardeners had their business about Earl's Court and Old Brompton; ploughs creaked slowly along where now dash the equipages of the great, the omnibus of the multitude, and everybody's hansom. With the Exhibition began the great change which has hereabouts almost swept away the landmarks of Old Kensington.

A little further on once stood Keusington House; a dull, old brick mansion that was once occupied by Louise de Querouailles, the beautiful mistress of Charles the Second, and of some fame later on as a Jesuit school. But that was pulled down, with Colby House adjoining, to make room for a mansion which was to be one of the grandest of modern times. The house rose like a vision; its broad façade dominated Kensington Gardens, so that from the Broad Walk it seemed as though they belonged to the new house rather than to that obscure old place in the corner. A whole colony of Irish were displaced, a rookery turned into a lake and pleasure ground, a gallery of modern pictures bought regardless of cost, together with statuary, carvings in wood and stone, elaborate staircases of coloured marbles; nothing that wealth could procure was lacking for the adornment of this sumptuous abode. Altogether, it is said, the house and its accessories cost a million of money, but it was never inhabited. When the fortunes of its author declined, it was found too costly and too comfortless for club-house or hotel, and finally was pulled down, and its materials scattered to the four winds; the marble staircase going to the new "Tussaud's." And now there is a handsome square and terrace on the site of the lake and gardens, and of the magnificent Palace of Crœsus.

As the Kensington High Street is reached, the scene still recalls the features of the ancient village. The gracious curve

of the highway, the irregular roofs and elevations suggest the old-fashioned High Street of a country town ; but, nevertheless, here is but another Piccadilly, with shop-fronts and buildings that may jostle with Regent Street, or Bond Street, and with as gay and varied a throng of feminine costumes.

Above us rises the handsome tower of Kensington Church, which, modern as it is, seems suggestive rather of the ancient days when the De Veres were lords paramount hereabouts. It is still Saint Mary Abbot's, and the name recalls how one of the earliest of the De Veres, for the good of his soul, and of the souls of his ancestors and descendants, endowed the ancient Abbey of Abingdon with church and adjacent lands, which became a kind of subsidiary manor to that where the Earl's court was still held, and was known as Abbot's Kensington. The old brick church, square, and quaint, and ugly, which many people, not yet beyond middle age, can remember, was in itself nothing to regret, and yet it harmonised with its surroundings, and seemed to bring back the "Queen Anne" and "King George" associations of the place. The little nook between the church-yard and the High Street, at the corner where the omnibuses stop, was once the site of the parish stocks ; the parish pump was not far off, perhaps under that old archway which is still a feature of the scene, translated into the modern masonry of the new Police-station. Here people would gather who intended travelling up to London, and a bell would be rung so that people might know that a convoy was about to start in that direction along the dark and lonely way, where footpads might lurk, or highwaymen be in ambush.

Even now a glance up Church Street, that curves up the hill beside the church, gives a faint impression of rural belongings ; and you cannot help thinking that over the brow of the hill there must open out a view of fields, hedgerows, and copse. And half a century ago we might have found it so ; have gathered nuts in Notting Hill, and enjoyed that prospect from the eminence which Faulkner declares to be equal to any in the vicinity of London. "From the church," writes Bowack, in 1705, "runs a row of buildings towards the north, called Church Lane ; but the most beautiful part of it" (Kensington) "is the square, which, for beauty of buildings and worthy inhabitants, may vie with the most noted London squares."

And Kensington Square is still worth a visit. Take one of the turnings out of the High Street opposite the church, and you find yourself in another kind of world. Tall old-fashioned houses blink kindly down upon you ; each has its own character, its own angle of roof, its distinguishing height, its particular doorway. Here the firelight gleams through the tall windows, and lights up the solid oak panelling within ; there the roomy portals seem about to open to give egress to Clarissa and Belinda. My Lady Castlewood lodged in Kensington Square, you will remember ; and at the "Greyhound," over against her ladyship's house, Harry Esmond kept watch all night, lest the Prince should escape, and slip after Mistress Beatrice. Well, there is the "Greyhound" sure enough, still filling and drawing ; and the whole surely seems as real to us as any of the actual denizens of the square. Only, somehow, the figure of the novelist himself seems also to be present, as he strolls homeward from the club. Thackeray ought to have lived in the square, in full harmony with the age which he loved so well to paint ; instead of which, he had his own house in Palace Gardens, with as much character about it as a churchyard monument. But in a corner, yonder, lived that famous, tedious old physician and poet, Sir Richard Blackmore ; and many of the wits who made money at his expense, must have envied him his dignified lodging. Addison lived here for a while ; and the Duchess of Mazarin, before she settled at Chelsea. Then would the gilt coaches be rolling this way ; and at night would the square be lit up smokily by the flaring links ; then would the chair-men jostle each other, with their freights of beauty helpless within the glass-chairs ; then would coachmen wrangle, and lacqueys dispute, while all the quiet people of the square, the deans and bishops —for the square was always the resort of the dignified clergy—would anathematise the din and racket. Probably the Duchess got notice to quit, for she was no favourite at Kensington Palace, and bishoprics and deaneries no longer came her way. But those who loved the basset-table, high play, good living, wit, and jollity, were always of her faction.

Through all the old square has kept up its dignity. There is an air about it that passeth fashion. There are convents all about, and sisterhoods, whose presence gives the place a quiet, sombre air, except

when the boys from the grammar school come trooping out, or the girl-graduates of the future gather about the portals of their college.

Of old, quiet Kensington, Hornton Street is one of the survivals, with its old-fashioned, russet-red brick houses; and here lived Dr. Dibdin, the bibliophile and collector, who is interesting as being the nephew of Charles, the author of the famous sea-songs. And Hornton Street leads "to Campden Hill so high," which is indeed the highest point in the immediate neighbourhood of London.

Old Campden House was built by Baptist Hicks, in the year 1612, and took its title, like its builder who was made Viscount Campden, from another Campden among the Gloucestershire wolds. The worthy silk mercer will always be famous—that is, as long as people are committed for trial at the sessions—as the builder of the original Hicks's Hall, or Clerkenwell Sessions House. But he was a vigorous builder on many another field, with fantastic notions of his own that left their mark in his buildings. It is said that Hicks won the site of Campden House from Walter Cope, the owner of the manor, at play; or more probably got it from him in a deal, for Hicks was hardly a gambler, but an excellent hand at a bargain. Anyhow, there was never any great extent of ground belonging to it, and it was soon abandoned as a residence by the noble lord, who had acquired it by marriage with the heiress of the Campdens, and was let on terms to occupants more or less distinguished.

The Princess of Denmark, afterwards Queen Anne, occupied the place for awhile, and after her the Countess of Burlington, with her son, Richard Boyle, of air-pump fame. In later times, the house was occupied as a school; but through all it remained in pretty much its pristine condition, till it found a tenant to appreciate its beauties, and fit it up after the antique fashion, when, alas! the old place caught fire—this was in 1862—and was burnt to the ground. It was built up again soon after, but has lost its antiquarian interest, although skilfully restored.

Close by is Holly Lodge, where Macaulay wrote much of his "History," and where he died, at last, in 1859, and where everything remains almost unaltered, as to the disposition of the grounds, and of those lawns and shrubberies which were his rest and refreshment. An observatory was

near at hand, Sir James South's, which has given its name to Observatory Lane. All about, and well housed, too, is a colony of Scotchmen, who find the air of Campden Hill the next best to that of their native heather, and who seem to have camped themselves about their great chieftain, the Macallum Mohr. Then there is the high water-tower crowning everything; and scattered studios here and there; and houses with the individual characters of artistic owners marked upon them.

On the other side of the slope were once the Kensington gravel-pits, which extended over what is now Notting Hill. At one time this was a great health resort for the Londoners, till they learnt to go further afield.

But Notting Hill is Kensington in no other than a parochial sense, while the Palace and Gardens, although parochially in Saint Margaret's, Westminster, belong to Kensington, to the Old Court suburb, by ties stronger than those of assessments or rates. So let our route bring us round to the dull red-brick palace of the Dutch Hanoverian fashion, that looks over the wide avenues of Kensington Gardens.

Although proud of its connection with the Court, Kensington cannot boast that this is of very ancient date. The Palace was no ancient seat of royalty, but originally was a plain, handsome villa belonging to Finch, Earl of Nottingham, from whom William the Third bought it, liking the soft, mild air, and the stretch of meadow and park land in front of it. Old Whitehall had then been destroyed by fire, and Saint James's was but a poor kind of residence; so henceforth the Court took up its town abode at Kensington. If people grumbled, who had been accustomed to see their Monarch taking his pleasures, and holding his state among them, William did not care. Nor was it more to the purpose that officials grumbled who had to ride backwards and forwards between Whitehall, and Westminster, and Kensington. But the road, it bad, was lighted with lamps—oil-lamps, with glazed lights—which were established between Kensington and Whitehall, as early as 1694. And this feeble line of flickering oil-lamps was then thought to have a wondrous festal glitter and courtly brilliance about it. But when the Court was away, there were no more lamps, and people had to scramble to and fro as they best could.

William presently turned Lord Nottingham's neat villa into something more like

a Palace. Christopher Wren had a touch at it here and there. He it was who built the orangery for Queen Anne. The eastern front was added by George the First from Kent's designs. George the Second added a new wing to form a nursery. But the old place has known no very violent changes, and still gives the appearance of such a homely Dutch château as would content its original builder.

William and Mary both died at Kensington Palace ; and also their successor, Anne, the death of the latter being marked by the bold coup d'état by which the Whig lords overpowered the Jacobite conspiracy, and proclaimed George of Hanover, an incident which Thackeray has turned to account in "Esmond."

The reign of George the Second was the period when Kensington was in its palmiest state. Caroline, the Queen, liked the place ; she gave orders about the gardens, extending, planting, digging, here creating a miniature lake, and there turning the marshy brook of Tyburn into a fine serpentine canal. But when George the Third came to the throne, the Court came no more to Kensington. Still, there were Royal personages about. Princes and Princesses had apartments in the palace ; and, in the fulness of time, the Duke and Duchess of Kent took up their abode in the palace, and their daughter, Victoria, was born there.

The State Apartments still remain in their trappings of faded tapestry, and the scanty furniture of little value. There are grand staircases of black and white marble, with balusters of fine twisted iron. Presence Chamber, the King's great drawing-room, the Queen's gallery, closets, and withdrawing-rooms, all are there ; but there has been no Royal presence to set the whole Court apparatus at work for a century and a quarter. It was on the morning of the twenty-fifth of October, 1760, that a heavy fall was heard in the King's apartments in Kensington Palace, soon after breakfast. The page in attendance rushed into the room. The King lay on the floor senseless. He was dead ; he had expired in a moment. There was no more of Kensington after that as a seat of the Court ; and thus it has remained ever since in the condition of a Royal dower-house.

By the palace gates, into the High Street, there are still soldiers and sentries about the old barracks ; and a three-cornered green, where the men sometimes take

their diversion in the way of quoits or throwing the hammer. And close by the gateway stands the "King's Arms," once thronged by gentlemen of the Court ; and, if Thackeray may be trusted, the scene of plot and counterplot, in stirring Jacobite times.

KING CARNIVAL.

SAINT VALENTINE is going out in Canada and King Carnival is coming in. February, the hardest, and, often, coldest month of the Canadian winter, is devoted to the service of the jolly monarch, at about the season when the good old Saint once held supreme sway. Youthful hearts, in the New World at least, no longer palpitate over Cupid's flowery missives, that milder excitement is superseded by a newer and far more engrossing one—the great "Canadian Carnival."

The old adage that, "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," has become an oft-quoted text of the Canadian pleasure creed, and has been aptly illustrated by more than one gigantic holiday display within the last few years. One fancies the severity of the climate has been impugned, else how could the citizens of Montreal almost live out of doors for the space of an entire week ? Offices are closed ; business, wherever possible, completely abandoned ; moon-light, torch-light, bonfire-light everywhere turns night into day.

The icy streets blaze with colour ; for not only all the Snow-shoe Clubs deem it a point of honour to wear the blanket costume about the streets during "Carnival Week," but numerous private individuals do likewise, not of course wearing club colours, but as each allows his fancy free scope, a rainbow variety of hues in dress is the result. The material which composes these picturesque costumes consists of blankets ; it may be dyed red, blue, green, or orange, purple, or even black. White is, however, the most popular, and by far the most tasteful. The whole city seems to be given up at this period to the mad pursuit of pleasure ; but it is pleasure of a healthful, innocent kind. Nothing is more common than to see a staid citizen, of mature age and high commercial standing, appear in festive snow-shoe costume, his grey hair crowned with a jaunty capuchin, with tassels streaming behind him in the wind ; his waist tied round with the gayest of sashes ; his feet encased in embroidered

moccasins. He is tearing off to the nearest toboggan "slide" to enjoy the fun, with a heart apparently as light as any schoolboy's.

The general features of Canadian Carnivals are of course yearly repeated, with the necessary alterations to suit the occasion. For instance, the members of the Montreal Snow-shoe Clubs paid Lord Lansdowne a graceful compliment, besides giving him a loyal welcome, when their "Snow-shoe Arch" (always a noticeable feature of each carnival) displayed the Lansdowne coat of arms—a bee-hive. This surmounted the arch, and was composed of men in snow-shoe costume, each row diminishing in number till the last three completed the oval. The effect was very fine; the opposing colours, worn by the different clubs, were harmoniously blended by the greater proportion of white. The soft sky-blue blankets of the "Trappeur" Club were very conspicuous, and attracted almost as much admiration as the giant circle of snow-shoes, built on each side of the living bee-hive and crowned with toboggans. A more thoroughly winter scene it would be impossible to imagine, and it was picturesque in the extreme.

But the crown of Canadian Carnivals is undoubtedly the "Ice Palace." This is more than picturesque. This is the very poetry of architecture. Its lofty towers and embattled walls stand out against the pearl-grey sky, blue as an iceberg in an arctic sea; its delicate beauty is a perpetual marvel in contrast with the solidity of the material of which it is composed. Again, it should be seen at sunset, when a background of purple sky, fast warming into pale crimson, floods with colour the gleaming columns, and makes each separate ice-block glow with an eye of fire; lastly, it may be seen upreared against a moonlight sky, dark, by contrast, with those walls and towers of soft yet dazzling light. One could imagine it was built of moonbeams and water; nothing less ethereal could fashion such a fairy dream.

On the third night of the Carnival the storming of the Ice Palace takes place. The central tower sends up volley after volley of fiery balls and showers of sparks. The smoke of the fireworks, rolling upwards, gives it the appearance of a castle besieged in the clouds, that keep turning to a deep, rose-coloured mist, through which gleams the great white edifice. Then, on the edge of this central magnificence, glows the red circle of the snow-shoe torch-

bearers who are storming the forts. Many hundreds of men they number, extending round the vast square fronting the "Windsor Hotel," and up the long streets they stretch, even to the very centre of Mount Royal. A giant, writhing, fiery serpent they look, in the distance, to those who have climbed the mountain to view the scene from above; but to those who stand in the city below, this snow-shoe torch procession, with its many-coloured lights, looks exactly like a jewelled necklace wound round and round the white skirts of the mountain.

On one occasion the medical students of McGill University formed a counter procession, and, headed by some enterprising spirits, rushed down into the Ice Palace, and with the aid of the fireworks they carried in with them, held it for some time against more than fourteen hundred men, to the astonishment of the returning army—who were quite unprepared for this manœuvre—and the intense delight of the Montreal citizens.

When the snow-shoe torch procession reaches the highest point on Mount Royal, rose-red lights are burned, accompanied by a grand pyrotechnic display. The appearance of the mountain at this moment—a mighty mass of pure white snow against a background of crimson fire—is indescribable. Then come the torch-bearers, marching down the steep ravine and filing round the bends in the roads to join their companions in the terraces below—a wheel within a wheel of living fire, that melts into one long zigzag chain traversing the city, ending in the central diamond, the Ice Palace.

The skating masquerade at the Victoria Rink is, in the opinion of many, the most delightful event of this holiday programme. The rink has a slanting roof, supported on each side by rows of wooden rafters; these are covered with the flags of all nations, and the long lines of gay bunting are reflected, as in a mirror, on the great ice sheets below, so that the skater seems to be gliding over a flag carpet. Sometimes an ice-grotto is built in the centre, the pillars of which catch every ray of light as in a prism; and upon the polished surface of the columns and down their transparent interior, dance ten thousand specks of rainbow hue. Within the basin of the grotto a fountain leaps upward, its spray one moment silvery as imprisoned moonbeams, the next an azure foam, with an orange heart; and then rose-

red like summer dawn ; and yet once more pale-green as sun-set sea.

May-poles are planted at each end of the rink, from which float long parti-coloured ribbons. The skaters form themselves in circles round these poles, each one seizes an end of ribbon, and, moving in and out of each other, after the fashion of a cotillon, they plait the ribbons. Then follow the "Lancers," which are executed with wonderful grace and skill. Only the most accomplished skaters are selected for this fancy skating ; but Canada abounds in good skaters of both sexes.

The entertainment opens in a most impressive manner ; the doors at the lower end are flung open, the band plays the National Anthem, and on the skaters come in one resistless throng, hundred after hundred, the most astonishing assembly of the splendid and the grotesque. Art amounts to positive genius in many of the dresses. There a huge black eagle swoops by, surrounded by a horde of carnival devils, all masked, and probably composed of the élite of the city. Yonder is a troop of fair ladies in the dress of the Georgian Court. Saxon Hereward is to be seen arm in arm with a Leadville miner, who has wound round his St. Ann's pyramid-hat a cotton spotted handkerchief. European princes, Arab chiefs, a dear little Quakeress waltzing with Mephistopheles, "Sairey Gamp" in the arms of a cavalry officer, a beautiful Queen "doing the roll" with a policeman ; these and many others fly by upon a floor slippery as glass, and shod with steel that glances like a diamond in the sunlight. A group of fishermen, clad in tarpaulin, in company with "Uncle Sam," distribute cards freely among the crowd, worded as follows :

"We have much pleasure in informing the general public o-fish-ally, that, after mature deliberation, the price of red herrings will remain the same.

"CHAMBERLAIN, TUPPER, AND CO." Such political hits are not uncommon ; and, of course, add zest to the entertainment.

Later on the skaters divide in long lines to form a passage on the ice, up which, with bursts of music, and flashes of light from the illuminated fountain, are ushered the Governor-General and his suite ; and seated beneath the canopy, at the upper end of the rink, they appear to be as much charmed as the rest of the world with the brilliant, and, to many, novel spectacle of a Canadian Skating Masquerade.

We now come to the cream of Canadian winter sports—tobogganing. A "slide" is frequently built upon a natural slope, on the top of which is erected a huge wooden platform, sometimes thirty-five feet in height. The entire length of the "slide" is about fourteen hundred yards. It is well covered with snow, watered freely, and allowed to freeze, which makes the track one long sheet of ice, smooth as glass. The upper part is encircled with a railing, and divided into six passages ; two by which the toboggans descend, a path on each side for those going up the hill, and a narrower passage in which to drag the toboggan.

It is a pretty sight to see a toboggan hill brilliantly illuminated with Chinese lanterns, an enormous bonfire at the foot of the hill painting in crimson a landscape of snow. Hark ! what is that indescribable swishing sound ? A toboggan ; on it comes like an infant tornado ; and, before any one has time to realise it is passing, it is lost in the depths below, a mere speck upon the distant whiteness of the road.

"It looks awful," is the comment of some Carnival visitor ; yet he is, nevertheless, burning to try it.

He does try it, and strangely blended with the thrill of apprehension, that naturally accompanies a first slide, is a glow of ecstatic delight. When the steerer gave that final hoist to the toboggan, the novice knows he was in for it, and clenches his teeth hard, and almost says a prayer—he seems to be rushing on the wings of a mighty wind right out of the world. But the marvel is, he enjoys it keenly, and rises from the toboggan with a long sigh of bliss. He feels at that moment that life henceforth is too short to get in enough slides. The enthusiasm and excitement with which Montreal visitors plunge into this amusement directly they arrive in the city, is extremely diverting. Ladies, clad in rich silk, satin, and sealskin—a sure sign they are quite unaccustomed to the pastime—rise from the toboggans at the foot of the slide, and tear up the hill again, eager for a second taste of the delightful novelty. Gentlemen, in plug hats, tied down with furry ears—no doubt models of sober business habits, in the cities from whence they came—rush up the hill like boys upon a frolic, in an agony lest they should be kept waiting for their "turn," for as there are on these occasions a very large number of pleasure-seekers, no one can take a slide whenever he wants to. The

crush on the platform is very great, and each takes his place at the top of the slide in turn, in the same way as if he were being admitted by ticket to some crowded entertainment.

The "Citizens' Drive" is always popular ; but a great many more take part in the procession than its name implies. There are the luxurious sleighs, glossy robes, and high-stepping horses of the wealthy side by side with the "habitan" from his French farm, with his rough little Canadian pony, and his old-fashioned box-sleigh. Another sleigh passes, fashioned like a huge boat, on the side of which is emblazoned "Kingfisher." It is drawn by six or eight prancing horses, and contains fifty or sixty people. And there are two young swells to be seen, driving a magnificent pair, with coloured reins, and chime of silvery bells, harnessed to a feather of a toboggan, with two snow-shoes, tied with ribbons and crossed, for a dash-board. But if one were to go on filling in details, the "Drive" would demand a special sketch. It must only be mentioned in passing as one of the strong points on the Carnival programme.

But we must go home through "the Pines," now—the great snow-shoe meeting-ground for clubs both public and private. It is a tract of woodland, waste and wild, where the tall pines rear themselves in solitary grandeur, leaning against the snow their dark mantles of perpetual green. Through the renowned "Gully" we pass. Now look at the city far below, flashing with myriads of lights ; the Ice Palace, in that dim distance, more like a new-fallen moon than any building formed by man. Below the city sweeps the river, now one rift of whiteness, broken only by the majestic line of the Victoria Bridge. A fiery eye glows on the opposite shore : it is the engine of the ice railway, with its long line of cars, crossing the mighty breast of the frozen giant. And still beyond, rise the great mountains Belle Isle and Rougemont, massing themselves in gloom and grandeur against the horizon, whilst overhead broods the solemn, shining silence of the stars.

THE ORETOWN BANK ROBBERY.

THE Bank had been robbed ! Such was the discovery made by Mr. Ebenezer Grubb, late one Saturday night, and the information was obtained in this wise : Frank

Jackson, a junior clerk, who lodged on the opposite side of the street, a little distance down, was sitting that evening at his window. He lingered over a quiet pipe, listlessly watching the passers-by, and dusk crept on unnoticed by him. He was about to draw the blinds and light the gas, when two men passed on the other side, one of them pausing and looking up towards his window, while the other went on to the Bank and knocked at the private door. The young man's curiosity was aroused upon seeing the one who remained enter a doorway, as if for concealment ; so, standing behind a curtain, he watched them.

The dull, grey front of the Bank was lit by a street-lamp, and as the man who knocked turned round while waiting, Jackson recognised Mark Seeley, the senior cashier. After a little delay the door was opened by the resident porter, and he and Seeley entered the building. In a minute or two they came out again, and the porter went towards a cross-street, while the cashier stood at the door, apparently awaiting his return. However, no sooner had the man turned a corner than Seeley again went in, and his companion hurried towards the Bank. As the lamplight fell upon him, Frank recognised another of the clerks, an intimate of Seeley's, named Williams. They reappeared in two or three minutes, and Williams, carrying in each hand a small Gladstone bag, hastened down a by-street, and was out of sight before the porter returned. Then, after a minute the cashier took the same direction.

Jackson was puzzled to explain these movements, especially as Williams had a couple of days' leave, and was supposed to be far from Oretown. Seeley was a high and well-paid officer, possessing the entire confidence of his employers. Frank sometimes thought that confidence misplaced. At all events, he had reason to believe that both men speculated in stocks ; a practice which the partners strictly forbade to their staff.

It was only a few days before, that one of the clerks, glancing through an evening paper, cried : "Hallo ! 'El Dorados' are gone down to nothing ; the affair is a complete smash ! By Jove, I know a fellow who had some of them." Jackson noticed Seeley turn white ; the hand that held the pen shook, and he turned round to speak in a whisper to Williams, who listened with a dazed look on his face.

Frank felt uneasy. He knew nothing certain, and it was an unpleasant task to

mention his suspicions to his employers ; however, he determined to do so, and at once set off to seek Mr. Ebenezer Grubb.

Hardly knowing what result to hope for ; dreading Mr. Grubb's annoyance on the one hand, if his suspicions were wrong, and fearing robbery on the other, Frank accompanied the principal to the Bank. Mr. Ebenezer walked straight to the strong-room, and opened it with his private keys, and then throwing open the chest in which the cash was kept, proceeded to examine its contents. A gas-jet just above them threw a bright light into the recesses of the safe, and showed the banker some parcels of bonds, a small pile of silver and copper, and nothing more.

The chief clerk, an old man, who, as well as the porter, lived on the premises, was by this time on the spot, and held open a cash-book.

"There should be there," he said, in an agitated voice, in reply to Mr. Grubb's question, "thirty-one thousand six hundred and seventeen pounds, eight shillings and ninepence."

There was no sign of force having been used ; and the chief clerk produced his key, which he averred had not left his hands since the safe was locked that afternoon, when the money was certainly there. Mr. Seeley often borrowed it during business hours. With that exception, he never lost sight of it.

The porter returned to say that Mr. Seeley was not expected home until Monday morning ; and the man explained that the cashier called that evening for something he forgot in his desk, and sent him on an errand which occupied perhaps ten minutes.

There hardly remained a doubt that the two clerks were the culprits ; and Mr. Grubb at once placed the matter in the hands of the police.

Frank Jackson long lay awake that night, wondering whether the events of the past few hours would bring him promotion ; and if so, what effect it would have on a certain cherished scheme of his.

Six or eight months before, he had met at a picnic Mary Grubb, the junior partner's daughter, a fair, winsome little thing, with dimpled cheeks, and eyes soft as those of a fawn. She had just returned from school ; and before Frank knew who she was, he admired her. Upon learning that she was Mr. Ebenezer's only child, he was keenly disappointed, for the daughter of

the wealthy banker was, he feared, beyond his reach. In spite of this, his attentions were not diminished ; and, before the day was at an end, he adored her. She received his little services with marked favour, he thought ; and even sober reflection could not prevent him from entertaining hopes which any one but a lover would have considered wild.

Mary often drove down for her father, and it generally fell to Frank's lot to take a message out, asking her to wait, or to call again, which furnished opportunities for a pressure of the hand and a few words. He was not endowed with an undue amount of vanity ; but he could not help seeing that on these occasions her eye brightened, and a vivid blush sprang to her cheek ; and he could not help thinking that, if his happiness depended on her, it would not be long deferred. But the social gulf between them kept his lips sealed. The events of the evening would probably bring him promotion, and he wondered if they would bring him nearer to Mary. His thoughts flew from her to the robbery, and back again, until sleep deserted him, and his brain grew dizzy.

Suddenly a thought flashed through his mind ; and, in the midst of the dark room, on the walls, on the ceiling, there appeared before him, as in letters of fire, a remark of Seeley's, uttered months before.

Some of the clerks were discussing the arrest of a dishonest bank-clerk, and Seeley said, laughingly : "If fellows will do that kind of thing, they ought at least to show some common sense in their method of escape. If he had gone to some quiet seaport, hired or bought a yacht, and sailed quietly off, he would now be enjoying himself in safety."

The tone, the cynical laugh rang in Frank's ears, and it occurred to him that Seeley would probably adopt some such course. Twenty miles away, on a branch line, stood Northport, a yachting centre ; and Williams might easily, on the previous day, have arranged for their flight.

Early on Sunday morning he called on Mr. Grubb to inform him of this idea, which, by being dwelt upon, had become a conviction. As Frank entered the banker's study Mary left it, her face pale and her eyes red, and Mr. Ebenezer himself sat listlessly in an easy-chair looking haggard.

"Above all," said the latter, when Jackson had finished what he went there to say, "silence about this wretched affair is

necessary for the present. I do not mind telling you that it has occurred at a rather unfortunate moment, as we shall be obliged to get accommodation, and to pay a heavy price for it; and if the story of the robbery leaks out prematurely, we may be ruined."

The young man was flattered by the confidence, and, as he looked at the weary face and heavy eyes, eloquent of anxiety and sleeplessness, and remembered Mary's troubled features, a feeling of wrath against those who caused all this grief possessed him.

After a short silence, Mr. Grubb said :

"Perhaps you would not mind running over to Northport yourself and making enquiries. I have faith in your shrewdness, and shall give you a letter to an old friend of ours, a magistrate there, who will help you if necessary. Here is some money, and remember, my lad, that time is of vital importance."

The trust made Frank colour with pride. His first hope was that fortune might make him instrumental in saving his employers from disaster; but he may be pardoned if there also entered into his mind a wish to earn a smile from Mary, as well as her father's gratitude.

A few enquiries among the Northport police and the loungers on the beach, satisfied him that his surmises were correct. Some days before two gentlemen, whose description tallied with that of the runaways, bought a small schooner-yacht from a local builder. The crew were ordered to hold themselves in readiness, stores were shipped, and the new owners arrived by the last train on the previous night. They met the seller on board, paid the purchase money, and at once sailed—for a month's cruise, they said.

"I have an urgent message for them," said Frank, to an old salt. "Would it be possible to get a fast steamer here and overtake them?"

"Well, sir, of 'ee could borry that thur craft," pointing to a small, rakish-looking steamer, whose brass fittings gleamed in the morning sun, "yes. They must 'a' gone south; and her'll go nigh on to twenty knots an hour."

Frank looked longingly at the vessel; and upon hearing the name of the owner, his heart bounded. It was the person to whom Mr. Grubb's letter was addressed.

"I fear yours is a wild-goose chase," said that gentleman, when the young clerk had told his story and explained his

wishes. "However, the Grubbs are dear old friends, and the 'Lorna' is at your service. Come with me, and I shall give directions to the master."

In little more than an hour the "Lorna" was steaming swiftly out of the harbour, and Frank, standing on the bridge beside the captain, felt almost intoxicated as the vessel's head rose and fell, and a fresh breeze blew across the sunlit sea, fanning his hot brow.

"There was a light nor'-west wind all night," remarked the captain; "and if we say they're eighty or ninety miles ahead we shan't be far out. I don't suppose we'll overtake her before dark," the captain went on, "so we'd better take it easy, lest we might pass 'em in the night."

They left their course several times, in order to make enquiries of passing vessels. Some had not seen "a thirty-ton yacht, schooner-rigged, green below the water-line, and with a broad gold stripe." Others thought they had, and gave such contradictory information that it was of no benefit.

As the sun went down, dark clouds arose to windward, and it became wet and stormy. All through the night the wind moaned, the waves swirled and hissed about the "Lorna's" bow, and fell in masses on her deck, and the rain fell heavily at intervals. "Five pounds a man," Frank had said, "if we overtake her!" He had promised the captain and the policeman whom he had brought with him, liberal gratuities if the chase ended successfully; he himself was too agitated to think of repose. Accordingly, throughout the night all were on the alert, peering into the darkness as the vessel slowly pursued a zigzag course.

"A wild-goose chase, indeed, I fear," Jackson said, sorrowfully, as morning broke, finding him cold, hungry, and exhausted.

"Never fear, sir," replied the skipper. "Twill be hard if we don't meet 'em before they get out of St. George's Channel."

The warm, autumn sun again poured down upon the sea, the wind fell to a fresh breeze, and save in the lofty-crested billows that surrounded them, there remained no trace of last night's storm.

At length they got positive news. A yacht's captain met the object of their pursuit an hour before, steering due south. He could not be mistaken, he knew the "Eulalie" very well, and his crew recog-

nised her, too. The "Lorna" was put at full speed, and bounded forward, throbbing and panting—not climbing the waves, but cleaving them; and over either side of the bow a constant stream of water poured inward and rushed along the deck.

"There she is!" exclaimed the captain, who for some minutes had been silently scanning the horizon, and he handed the glass to Frank. It was some time before the young man could discern anything; then he saw the dark hull, the slender spars, and the white sails like gossamer against the sky.

Soon, figures were seen on board the "Eulalie," then the sails were slightly altered, and as the little craft heeled over, the foam flew in clouds from her bow. Pursuit was evidently suspected, for two men at the stern did not take their eyes from the steamer, which was rapidly overhauling them, and darkening the sea with a dense cloud of smoke.

At length the two vessels were abreast, the "Lorna" about fifty yards to leeward of the other. There was no one on the "Eulalie's" deck, except three or four sailors in blue guernesey and red caps.

"Tell your gents," roared the master of the steamer, "that there's some one here wants 'em."

One of the men thrust his head down the cabin stairs, and in a few moments replied, with a grin: "He is to come on board, if he likes to."

There was a heavy sea running, and the "Eulalie" was going at perhaps ten miles an hour, so that boarding, if not impossible, was at least dangerous. The policeman, who was in plain clothes, and whose identity no one on board the "Lorna" suspected, came forward, and said:

"Now, my lads, I am a police officer, and have a warrant for the arrest of two men for a bank robbery. You are all known, and, if you aid them to escape, will get into trouble."

The jaw of the jocular yachtsman dropped, and he went forward to his fellows. After a short consultation they sprang to the halyards, and the mainsail coming down with a rush and a clatter, the vessel righted, and her speed at once diminished. At the same moment Frank saw at a port-hole Seeley's face, white and terror-stricken.

The "Lorna" was brought nearer, a boat was lowered, and Frank, the officer, and the master went on board the "Eulalie." As they stepped on the deck a pistol-shot

was heard, and they rushed towards the cabin.

Frank was the first to go down, and he saw the two fugitives. Williams lay on a cushion at one side of the compartment, his face covered with blood. Opposite him sat Mark Seeley, an expression of abject terror on his pale face, one hand hanging loosely, and holding a revolver, which dropped from his nerveless fingers as Jackson came down.

He uttered a hoarse cry, and made a feeble effort to seize the weapon; but Frank grasped his arm, and he fell back on the couch, fainting. The young man turned towards Williams, who amid his agony was looking contemptuously at his accomplice.

"We thought of sinking the vessel," he said, in a weak voice, "but found it too slow. Then we agreed to shoot ourselves. I led off, but that cur backed out, though it was all his doing. He took the impression of the other key, and—" His eyes became glazed, he fell back, and in a few moments was dead.

After a search Frank found, in a locker, the two Gladstone bags, which, to within a thousand pounds—the purchase and fitting-out of the yacht probably—contained the whole of the stolen property.

"She's leaking!" exclaimed the skipper of the "Lorna."

A small stream ran from under a closed door, and trickled across the floor. It rapidly grew larger, and suddenly the door was burst open and a volume of water poured into the little cabin, rising to the height of the couches. The master of the steamer sprang up the stairs, Frank followed with the precious bags, and the officer, grasping Seeley's arm, said: "Now, sir, if you please," and pushed him towards the deck.

As the policeman drew a pair of handcuffs from his pouch, the ex-cashier looked wildly round, and, with his hands pressed to his brow, ejaculated:

"Oh, my God! am I going back to Oretown for people to stare at?"

Then he looked over the side, and the officer, fearing an attempt at suicide, hastily seized his arm.

"She's sinking! she's sinking!" came from some of the sailors; and the bow of the "Eulalie" was suddenly raised out of water.

There was a moment of confusion, during which Mark Seeley bounded towards the cabin, and, before he could be stopped, had closed and bolted the door. The

burly officer threw himself against it and made it quiver; but was unable to open it.

Meanwhile the bow rose slowly, higher and higher, and for their own safety, those on board the "Eulalie" were obliged to leave the doomed craft. They had reached the "Lorna" when the end came. The yacht rolled from side to side, and gradually sank lower; then the deck blew up with a loud crash; a mass of foam and spray hid the "Eulalie" for a moment, and when it had cleared away she was gone.

The steamer was headed for the nearest seaport, and, as Frank drove towards the railway station, he saw in the window of a newspaper office a poster, in front of which a crowd was gathered. One or two of the words attracted his attention, and, stopping the cab, he alighted, and read in huge letters :

"Run on an Oretown Bank.—Alleged Extensive Robbery by Cashiers.—Flight of the supposed Delinquents."

When Frank, accompanied by the policeman, dashed up in a cab to the Bank doors, he saw groups of idlers loitering on the opposite side of the way, and two streams of people, one entering and one leaving the building. He went in by the private door, and on getting inside the counter, found the space allotted to the public filled to its utmost extent. The partners sat in a private office, at one end of the large room, from which they could see what passed outside. Both looked weary and anxious.

Mr. Ebenezer sprang to his feet upon seeing the young clerk, and asked, quickly:

"Well?"

"It is all right, sir," Jackson replied. "Here it is."

"Thank Heaven!" said the younger man, a tear springing to his eye; and, turning to his brother, he shook his hand.

"We are saved!" he said. "This will keep us going until to-morrow. Go out," he continued, addressing Frank, "and distribute the money. Do it without any fuss—just as you would had it come from next door."

Frank emptied the bags on a large table in view of all present, showing glittering streams of bright gold, and large bundles of crisp notes, neatly folded and securely tied.

"Half an hour more," whispered one of the clerks, "and we should have been cleared out."

The sight of so much money reassured

the timid; the crowd, composed almost altogether of small depositors, gradually melted away; and when at length, after vainly waiting for further claims, Mr. Grubb ordered the doors to be closed, there were still several thousands of pounds in the Bank coffers. The crisis was past. The branches had met all demands; and when the Bank doors were opened next morning, several heavy cases, bearing the seals of the Bank of England, were being unpacked, and Grubb's Bank was saved.

It was some hours after Frank's return that Mr. Ebenezer first referred to the cause of his absence.

"Run home and dress, Jackson, my boy," he said. "I shall call for you, and take you home to dinner. We want to hear your story."

Frank obtained immediate promotion; but his reward did not end there. He had won Mary's affection before his adventure, and that event secured her father's consent to their union. He is now virtually at the head of the Bank, Mr. Ebenezer, the only surviving partner, having unbounded faith in the sagacity of his son-in-law.

SEA LEGENDS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

ONE of the oldest superstitions connected with the sea is undoubtedly that which associated peril with the malefic influence of some individual on shipboard. We find it in the case of the seamen of Joppa, who, when overtaken by a "mighty tempest" on the voyage to Tarshish, said to each other, "Come and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is cast upon us." The lot, as we know, fell upon Jonah, and after some vain wrestling with the inevitable, the men at last "took up Jonah and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging."

We do not, of course, offer here any comment on, or explanation of, the scriptural narrative, but we invite the reader to compare with it the following remarkable story which that indefatigable deliver after old-world wonders, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, has preserved.

Somewhere about midsummer of the year 1480, a ship, sailing out of the Forth for a port in Holland, was assailed by a furious tempest, which increased to such a

remarkable degree for such a mild season of the year, that the sailors were overcome with fear, and gave themselves up for lost. At length an old woman, who was a passenger by the vessel, came on deck and entreated them to throw her overboard as the only means of preserving their own lives, saying that she had long been haunted by an "Incubus" in the shape of a man from whose grasp she could not free herself. Fortunately for all parties there was another passenger on board—a priest—who was called to the rescue. After a long admonition, and many sighs and prayers, "there issued forth of the pumpe of the ship," says Hollinshed, "a foul and evill-favoured blacke cloud, with a mightie terrible noise, flame, smoke, and stinke, which presentlie fell into the sea, and suddenlie, thereupon, the tempest ceased, and the ship passing in great quiet the residue of her journie, arrived in safetie at the place whither she was bound."

There is doubtless some association between this class of superstition and the old Talmudic legend, according to which the devils were specially angered when, at the creation, man received dominion over the things of the sea. This was a realm of unrest and tempest, which the devils claimed as belonging to themselves. But, says the legend, although denied control of the life that is in the sea, the devils were permitted a large degree of power over its waters, while over the winds their rule was supreme.

There is scarcely a current legend or superstition which cannot be traced to very remote sources. Thus, in the Chaldean-Babylonian cosmogony, there was a Triad, which ruled the three zones of the universe: the heaven, by Anu; the surface of the earth and the atmosphere, by Bel; and the under-world, by Nonah. Now Nonah is held to be both the same as the Assyrian Hea, or Saviour, and as the Noah of the Bible. So when Tiamat, the dragon, or the Leviathan, opens "the fountains of the great deep," and Anu, "the windows of heaven," it is Hea, or Noah, who saves the life of man.

This legend is supposed, by M. François Lenormant, to explain an allusion in one of the most ancient Accadian manuscripts in the British Museum, to "the serpent of seven heads, that beats the sea." This hydra was the type of the destructive water-demon, who figures in the legends of all countries.

In the same way, to the Syrian fish-

deities, Dagon and Artergatis, must we look for the origin of our Undines and fish-maidens, and mer-maidens.

The "Nixy" of Germany has, by some, been supposed traceable to "Old Nick"; but this is not probable, since Saint Nicholas has been the patron-saint of sailors for many centuries. It was during the time of the Crusades that a vessel on the way to the Holy Land was in great peril, and Saint Nicholas assuaged a tempest by his prayers. Since then he has been supposed to be the protector of mariners, even as Neptune was in ancient times, and in most Roman Catholic countries you will find, in seaport towns, churches dedicated to Saint Nicholas, to which sailors resort to return thanks for preservation at sea and to make votive offerings.

The German Nixy was, no doubt, a later form of the old Norse water-god, Nikke. You meet with him again, in another form, in Neckan, the soulless.

The "Nixa," along the Baltic coast, was once, however, much feared by the fishermen. It was the same spirit which appears as the Kelpie in Scotland—a water-demon which caused sudden floods to carry away the unwary, and then devoured them.

There was a river-goddess in Germany, whose temple stood at Magdeburg, of whom a legend exists that she also once visited earth and went to market in a Christian costume, where she was detected by a continual dripping of water from the corner of her apron. Generally speaking, however, the Nixies may be described as the descendants of the Naiads of ancient times, and as somewhat resembling the Russian Rusalkas, of which the peasantry live in much dread.

A Russian peasant, it is said, is so afraid of the water-spirits that he will not bathe without a cross round his neck, nor ford a stream on horseback without signing a cross on the water with a scythe or knife. In some parts, these water-spirits are supposed to be the transformed souls of Pharaoh and his host, when they were drowned, and the number is always being increased by the souls of those who drown themselves.

It is said that in Bohemia fishermen have been known to refuse aid to drowning persons lest "Vodyany" would be offended and prevent the fish from entering the nets.

This "Vodyany," however, seems rather a variant of the old Hydra, who reappears

in the diabolical names so frequently given to boiling springs and dangerous torrents. "The Devil's Tea-kettles" and "Devil's Punch-bowls" of England and America have the same association as the weird legends connected with the Strudel and Wirbel whirlpools of the Danube, and the rapids of the Rhine, and other rivers. Curiously enough we find the same idea in "The Arabian Nights," when "The sea became troubled before them, and there arose from it a black pillar ascending towards the sky, and approaching the meadow, and behold it was a Jinn of gigantic stature."

This demon was a waterspout, and waterspouts in China are attributed to the battles of dragons. "The Chinese," says Mr. Moncure Conway, "have canonised of recent times a special protectress against the storm-demons of the coast, in obedience to the wishes of the sailors."

The swan-maidens, who figure in so many legends, are mere varieties of the mer-maiden, and, according to the Icelandic superstition, they and all fairies were children of Eve, whom she hid away on one occasion when the Lord came to visit her, because they were not washed and presentable! They were condemned to be invisible for ever.

A Scotch story, quoted by Mr. Conway, rather bears against this theory. One day, it seems, as a fisherman sat reading his Bible, a beautiful nymph, lightly clad in green, came to him out of the sea, and asked if the book contained any promise of mercy for her. He replied that it contains an offer of salvation to "all the children of Adam," whereupon she fled away with a loud shriek, and disappeared in the sea. But the beautiful stories of water-nymphs, of Undines and Loreleis, and mer-women, are too numerous to be even mentioned, and too beautiful, in many cases, to make one care to analyse.

One of the most circumstantial descriptions of these amphibious mysteries, it may be recalled, was quoted in this Journal, in a paper about "A New North-West Passage." There is, however, a tradition in Holland that when, in 1440, the dikes were broken down by a violent tempest, the sea overflowed the meadows. Some women of the town of Edam, going one day in a boat to milk their cows, discovered a mermaid in shallow water floundering about with her tail in the mud. They took her into a boat, brought her to Edam, dressed her in women's clothes, and

taught her to spin, and to eat as they did. They even taught her something of religion, or, at any rate, to bow reverently when she passed a crucifix; but they could not teach her to speak. What was the ultimate fate of this remarkable creature we do not know.

The reader who desires to know more about these mythical inhabitants of the sea, will find many interesting notes about them in Mr. Baring-Gould's "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages."

Everybody, of course, is familiar with the old sea-legend of the Flying Dutchman—whether in stories of Phantom Ships, or in the Opera of Wagner. The spirit of Vanderdecken, which is still supposed to roam the waters, is merely the modern version of our old friend, Nikke, the Norwegian water-demon. This is a deathless legend, and used to be as devotedly believed in as the existence of Mother Carey, sitting away up in the north, despatching her "chickens" in all directions to work destruction for poor Jack. But Mother Carey really turns out to be a most estimable being, if Charles Kingsley's account of her in his story of "Water-Babies" be correct.

"Sailors," says Brand, in his "Popular Antiquities," "usually the boldest Men alive, are yet frequently the very abject slaves of superstitious Fear. They have various puerile Apprehensions concerning Whistling on Shipboard, carrying a Corpse, etc., all which are Vestiges of the old Woman in human Nature, and can only be erased by the united Efforts of Philosophy and Religion."

It is to be regretted, however, that the good Brand did not devote as much attention to the Superstitions of Sailors as he did to those of some other folks. In effect, he has left us little more than the above.

As is the case with almost all folk-lore, little variety is to be found in the sea superstitions of different nations. The ideas of the supernatural on shipboard are pretty much the same, whether the flag flown be the Union Jack, the German Eagle, the French Tricolor, the Yankee Stars and Stripes, or even the Chinese Dragon. These superstitions are numerous, and are tenaciously clung to, but yet it would not be fair to say that seamen are, as a class, more superstitious than landsmen of their own rank. The great mystery of the sea; the uncertainty of life upon its bosom; the isolation and frequent loneliness; the wonder of the storms, and calms, and lights

—everything connected with a sailor's occupation is calculated to impress him with the significance of signs and omens.

That mariners do not like to have a corpse on board is not remarkable, for the majority of people ashore get rather "creepy" if they have to sleep in a house where lies a dead body. Moreover, the old idea of bad luck which led to the throwing overboard of Jonah, is in this case transferred from the living to the dead. The objection to whistling is also explainable by the old practice of "whistling for a wind," for an injudicious whistler might easily bring down a blow from the wrong quarter.

There are some animals and birds which have a peculiar significance at sea. The cat, for instance, is generally disliked, and many sailors will not have one on board at any price, and, if there is one which becomes unusually frisky, they will say the cat has got a gale of wind in her tail. On one part of the Yorkshire coast, it is said, sailors' wives were in the habit of keeping black cats to ensure the safety of their husbands at sea, until black cats became so scarce and dear that few could afford to buy one. Although Jack does not like a cat in the ship, he will not throw one overboard, for that would bring on a storm.

Miss Smith, in her book about "Music of the Waters," states that a dead hare on a ship is considered a sign of an approaching hurricane, and Cornish fishermen declare that a white hare seen about the quays at night indicates that there will be rough weather. Miss Smith also gives a number of other superstitions, some of which we will mention as we go along.

The pig is an object of aversion to Japanese seamen, and also to Filey fishermen, who will not go to sea if they meet one in the early morning. But, indeed, the pig seems to be generally disliked by all seafarers, except in the form of salt pork and bacon.

Rats, however, are not objected to; indeed, it would be useless to object, for they overrun all ships. And rats are supposed to only leave a vessel when it is going to sink. A Welsh skipper, however, once cleared his ship of them without the risk of a watery grave, by drawing her alongside a cheese-laden ship in harbour. He quietly lay alongside, and, having left the hatches open all night, drew off with a chuckle in the morning, leaving a liberal legacy to his neighbour.

The Stormy Petrel is supposed to herald

bad weather, and the Great Auk to tell that land is very near. This is true enough as regards the Auk, which never ventures beyond soundings; but one doubts the truth of the popular belief that when the sea-gulls hover near the shore, a storm is at hand. The Scotch rhyme runs:

Sea-gull, sea-gull, sit on the sand,
It's never good weather when you're on the land.

Mr. Thistleton Dyer quotes from Sinclair's "Statistical Account of Scotland" in confirmation of this belief, that in the county of Forfar, "when they appear in the fields, a storm from the south-east generally follows; and when the storm begins to abate, they fly back to the shore." This does not accord with our experience of the west coast of Scotland, where the sea-gulls frequent the shores of lochs and hillsides far inland all the summer. Naturally there are storms sometimes after their appearance, but just as often fine weather continues. As well say that the flocks of these beautiful birds that follow in the wake of a tourist steamer to pick up unconsidered trifles presage seasickness to the passengers.

It is said that in Cornwall sailors will not walk at night along portions of the shore where there have been many wrecks, as they believe that the souls of the drowned haunt such localities, and that the "calling of the dead" has been frequently heard. Some even say that they have heard the voices of dead sailors hailing their own names. One can readily excuse a timorousness in Jack in such circumstances. Many persons besides sailors shrink from localities which have been the scenes of murder or sudden death.

Friday is the sailor's pet aversion, as an unlucky day on which to sail or begin work. But this is not surprising, when we remember that Friday has everywhere more superstition and folk-lore attached to it than any other day in the week, originating, perhaps, as Mr. Thistleton Dyer suggests, from the fact that it was the day on which Christ was crucified. Lord Byron had the superstitious aversion to Friday; and even among the Brahmins no business must be commenced on this day. In Lancashire a man will not "go a-courtin' on Friday; and Brand says: "A respectable merchant of the city of London informed me that no person will begin any business, that is, open his shop for the first time, on a Friday." The "respectable merchant" might be hard to find now.

adays, but still one does not need to go to sailors to find a prejudice against Friday.

Other things which are accounted unlucky by superstitious seamen are: to sneeze on the left side at the moment of embarking; to count the men on board; to ask fishermen, before they start, where they are bound for; to point with the finger to a ship when at sea; to lose a mop or water-bucket; to cut the hair or nails at sea, except during a storm.

With regard to this last, Miss Smith whimsically suggests that a calm voyage must send back a crew "whose fingers would be formidable weapons to encounter, and whose locks would be suggestive of *Rip van Winkle* or *Robinson Crusoe*."

These are a few of the sea superstitions as preserved in rhyme:

The evening grey and the morning red,
Put on your hat or you'll wet your head.

(Meaning that it will rain.)

When the wind shifts against the sun,
Trust it not, for it will run.

(That is, soon change again.)

When the sun sets in the clear,
An easterly wind you need not fear.

The evening red and morning grey,
Are sure signs of a fine day.

(A distich not peculiar to followers of the sea.)

But the evening grey and morning red,
Makes the sailor shake his head.

This refers to the barometer:

First rise, after low,
Indicates a stronger blow.

And this:

Long foretold, long last;
Short notice, soon past.

These, however, are hardly superstitions, but maxims based on experience. Of the same character are the following:

It squalls
When the rain's before the wind
Halyards, sheets, and braces mind.

Also,

When the wind's before the rain
Soon you may make sail again.

And

When the glass falls low,
Prepare for a blow;
When it rises high,
Let all your kites fly.
A rainbow in the morning,
Sailors take warning;
A rainbow at night,
Is the sailor's delight.

The Manx fishermen have many curious sayings about herrings. Thus the common expression, "As dead as a herring," is due to them. They say also, "Every herring must hang by its own gills," and their favourite toast is, "Life to man and

death to fish." They count one hundred and twenty-four fish to the hundred, thus: they first sort out lots of one hundred and twenty, then add three to each lot, which is called "warp," and then a single herring, which is called "tally." Before shooting the nets at sea every man goes down on his knees at a sign from the skipper of the boat, and, with his head uncovered, prays for a blessing on the fishing.

The sound of the death-bell is often supposed to be heard at sea before a wreck, and this idea may be either associated with the bell-buoy which marks many sunken, dangerous rocks, or with the religious ceremonies of the old days.

At Malta it is usual to ring the church bells for an hour during a storm "that the wind may cease and the sea be calmed," and the same custom prevails, we are told, both in Sicily and Sardinia.

Miss Smith mentions a Cornish legend of the bells of Bottreaux Church, which were sent by ship, which was lost in sight of the town, owing to the blasphemy of the Captain. "The bells are supposed to be in the bay, and announce by strange sounds the approach of a storm."

There is a suggestion of Sir Ralph the Rover in this legend; but, indeed, the superstitions of those connected with the sea are so interwoven, that it is not easy to disentangle them. No doubt our mariners derived many of them from the old Spanish navigators, who once swayed the Main, for the Spaniards are one of the most superstitious nations in the world.

"FOR SWEET CHARITY."

A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By B. DEMPSTER.

Author of "*Through Gates of Gold*," "*My Lady's Chamber*," "*The Mystery of Deadman's Flat*," etc. etc.

CHAPTER III.

THREE days after the strange meeting in the Gardens, Daisy Carr received a letter from her lawyer at Broadford, containing a startling piece of news. The missing will, which had cost her grandfather his inheritance, had been found in a secret cupboard of the old house in which he had lived and died. By it, Daisy Carr, as his direct descendant, could claim the whole of the property which, by the loss of this will, had passed from them. The lawyer gave her very little information of its finding. He really knew nothing. A workman—from the

description given by his servant — had left a packet at his house late the previous evening, saying that it was very important, and was to be delivered into his hands immediately. When he had opened it, he found the will. The workman had disappeared; nor had anything since been seen of him. The lawyer had gone straight to the house where Jane, the woman in charge, had told him that she had received orders from Miss Carr to allow this same workman to do as he wished in the house. The woman said he had been shut up in one of the rooms for a long time. That he had come out, finally, looking very pleased, carrying a packet in his hand. He had gone from the house into Broadford. With the will had been a little note saying that it had been found in a secret drawer in the room, and that any further information the lawyer would be able to get from Miss Carr herself.

Miss Carr was astounded. If she claimed this property, she became a very rich woman. She thought how her grandfather's life had been wasted and embittered in vain regrets for it, when all the time, close at his hand, was the will that gave it to him. And now he was dead, and it had been found at last. For a moment, this great fortune seemed very worthless. Then her thoughts went to the mysterious workman who had done this service for her. All day long she thought over this strange thing that had happened to her. She said nothing to anybody. There was no one, really, to speak to. Mrs. Cecil was in a most unusually bad temper. Besides, she was not one to whom Daisy would have gone with any news, either good or bad, and she had no friends in London. She thought over it, trying to realise it, and the wonderful difference it would make in her position. But, somehow, she felt a curious lack of interest in it; or, rather, her thoughts always found themselves wandering to the man who had thus changed her whole life for her. Why had he taken this trouble? Had he come over to England just to do it? Surely, he was very grateful. And it was such a little thing she had once done for him! These thoughts were most unprofitable. She found herself growing more restless and excited with a strange trouble and pain as the day went on. About half-past four — impelled by what strange impulse she never knew — she slipped out of the house and went towards the Gardens.

She made her way to the Serpentine. It was dark; but not foggy as the previous evening when she had come. As she neared the Long Water, she hardly knew what she expected to see; but when she reached the edge of the basin, at the spot where she had stood before, she saw what, she knew now, she had expected to see all along — a tall figure in the rough working-clothes, which accentuated rather than disguised the aristocratic grace of its bearing. She was suddenly afraid, and would have turned back; but it was too late. He came quickly forward through the clear dusk.

"You have come! I felt I was worse than a fool to hope it! But —"

"Of course, I should wish to see you again!" she said, recovering herself a little, as she forgot womanly shyness and pride in the remembrance of what he had done for her. "All day long, I have been expecting a note from you. Then, as it did not come, I thought I would just see if you were here. How can I thank —"

"By saying nothing of it," with a smile. "But I must tell you a little. If I had not seen you to-night — I should have written."

"You would not have tried to see me again!" she exclaimed, quite unconscious of the reproach in her voice.

He flushed darkly, his eyes growing bitter.

"No—I—Miss Carr, men gamble like fools with their lives, and—well, I played away mine, once—and I am not fit to speak to such as you. But," with a note of impatient self-scorn, "I did not come here to talk of myself. I want to tell you how I have been able to do you this trifling service. The man I spoke to you about, was the son of your great-uncle's servant. Your great-uncle, Thomas Carr, who, by the loss of that will, inherited the property that should have been your grandfather's. This servant, James Weston, was devoted to your great-uncle. He had some grudge against your grandfather, and hated him as much as he loved his master. He knew of the two wills that had been made. One benefited your grandfather, the other his brother. On the night of the death of their father, which was very sudden, he managed to gain access to the room where these wills were kept, and taking possession of one, hid it away in that drawer. He was afraid to destroy it. It turned out as he had hoped. The only will found gave the property to your great-

uncle, who inherited it. But there was always a suspicion of foul play, which, I daresay you heard, told against your great-uncle all his life. You will see, however, that he was not the sinner ; for his servant, James Weston, never breathed to him a word of what he had done. Still, he knew"—as Daisy uttered an exclamation—"that by the father's constantly expressed intention, he meant to leave the property to your grandfather. However, any way, if he suspected unfair play, he said nothing, and took advantage of it. James Weston kept the secret ; but betrayed himself, on his death-bed, to his son. This son—who had come over from America to see his father before he died—troubled very little about it. But when he came to die, it seemed to worry him, as it had haunted his father. He told me that his father had evidently suffered considerable remorse for his share in the matter, and was tormented with the doubt whether he ought not to put the wrong straight before dying. But he did not. His son felt, now, that he might help atone for his father's sin. I was the only one by him. He told me all about it, making me promise that I would shield his father's name as well as I could. I do not think I should have undertaken the charge—I was callous enough at the time, and old wrongs, affecting other people, did not trouble me. But, suddenly, I found out from what he said, that it affected you ! The one who had helped me at my direst necessity. It was a strange coincidence. It changed all. I promised him, and, directly he was dead, came."

"And you came all this way for me !"

"It was nothing ! Do you remember what you did for me ?"

"Nothing ! I gave you my supper !" with a laugh that had an odd little note in it. "You were fainting for food, and I didn't want it."

"Was it your own supper ? I have often wondered—" Then he checked himself abruptly and went on again in a hard tone, "I hope you will have no difficulty about your inheritance. I must leave England to-morrow."

There was a slight pause.

"There will not be any difficulty," she said, in a spiritless tone. "For I shall not take advantage of the will."

"Not take advantage of it !"

"No ! What do you take me for ?" with a note of anger in her voice. "Those people have had it all these years. They

have learned to think it their right. I shall not take it from them. After all, I have never been rich. I do not care to be rich. I would rather work for my living !"

What folly possessed her ? She did not know. She felt that it was impossible to deprive these relations, now, of a property which, even if they had inherited it unjustly, had still come to them in all innocence, as far as they were concerned. But she was scarcely thinking of them now.

His face changed strangely. He turned it from her. And as he looked into the darkness, two men stepped out of it, up to his side.

One was a policeman, the other a detective in plain clothes.

The latter laid his hand on his arm.

"I have a warrant for your arrest for forgery, Mr. William Cecil," he said, quietly.

CHAPTER IV.

How the next fortnight went by, Daisy never knew. She was rich. The relation who at the time held the property was an old lady. The lawyer, knowing something of Daisy's nature, had written straight to her and acquainted her with the facts of the case. The old lady, who was very delicate, was much disturbed at the news. She insisted upon seeing Daisy, and repairing the wrong unintentionally done her. She destroyed the will she had made, leaving the property elsewhere, and made Daisy her heiress ; only begging her to let her live with her the short time she had left on earth. Daisy, who had never known what it was to have a woman relation in the world, grew very fond of the old cousin. Indeed, her kindly protection made the miserable fortnight that followed more endurable to her. She scarcely thought of her own new life. That the man she had helped so long ago, who had helped her so well in return, should be Lord Goldtree's eldest son was strange enough. But to find him a felon ; to see him waiting to take his trial as a forger was intolerable. She had left the Cecils the next morning after the arrest. She could not have stayed another day in their house. She felt almost certain that they, more than the father, had had the most to do in arresting him. Surely the father would have been only too glad to let him leave England unmolested. When Daisy thought that it was through her that Will Cecil had come to England, her

position became still more unendurable. She remembered his reckless, extravagant life—the sins she had abhorred in him—she thought of the cheque, by which, after unlimited favours and benefits lavished on him, he had tried to rob his father, and yet, hating, despising the sins as she did, she could not forget the sinner. She felt shamed herself by thinking of him. But it was no good. The scene that was always present with her was the country lane, with the fainting, weary man, flying even then from justice, craving her aid. He was in greater trouble now, and she was doing nothing for him.

Would nothing stay this horrible prosecution? It was most unnatural. Surely his father and brothers must see that they were bringing dishonour on themselves.

Lord Goldtree was a cruel, vindictive man; but he must have some sense of mercy—some sense of the fitness of things. If only some one could see him—plead with him. She herself was quite outside the family. Since her departure, she heard and saw nothing of them. Daisy did not dare go to the house to make enquiries. What would they think of her asking about Mr. William Cecil? She could not question the servants about the family troubles. She did try to see Mrs. Charles one day, hoping to get some news. But Mrs. Charles had a headache, and sent down word to say that she could not see Miss Carr that morning. All that Daisy could find out was from a notice in the paper of the approaching trial. It, of course, made a great stir in the fashionable world; but she was living so completely out of it, nursing her new-found relation in the country, that she heard nothing of it. But one day, when she had gone up to London on business, about a week before the trial came off, she met Mrs. Charles Cecil's maid. The latter had always been very civil to Daisy. She stopped now; and after expressing her pleasure at meeting her, and her dismay at seeing her looking so thin and pale, she discoursed volubly about the family affairs. Daisy let her speak. She felt sick at heart for want of news. She heard that old Lord Goldtree was more morose and savage than ever. That Mr. Moreton—his man—was quite worn out. That all the household, keenly excited by the approaching trial, was certain that the old man was suffering dreadfully about it, though he would not give in. That Mr. and Mrs. Charles were also looking worried

and harassed. That Mrs. Charles was nearly out of her mind with other worries, too. The maid said that both the dress-maker and jeweller had been making themselves very unpleasant lately. That she supposed it was all this worry of her own that made Mrs. Charles so indifferent about Mr. William's position.

"She has any amount of influence with Lord Goldtree," said the maid, indignantly. "And we're all sure, if she'd plead for him, the old gentleman would give up this wicked trial."

Daisy let her talk on. A sudden thought had come to her. With this thought came a conviction. It was horrible, but it was true. The Charles Cecils, for their own ends, wanted to get the elder brother out of the way. What was their reason? The maid's chatter about their debts told her. If she could make terms with them! If she could get Mrs. Charles to plead to the old man for the prisoner! No one would ever know her share in it. There would be no need. When Will Cecil was once free, he would be dead to her. Not even for the sake of what he had done for her, could they ever meet again as friends. She could never call a man a friend who had been guilty of such a base crime as that. To her credit at the bank there lay a sum of twenty thousand pounds; Miss Spencer, her cousin, had placed it there two days before; instead of it being invested in her name, as was intended, she would draw it out.

That same afternoon, she called on Mrs. Charles. She was admitted this time. The interview between the two women lasted some time. When it was over, Mrs. Charles sat crying, partly with relief, partly with anger and baffled curiosity. What had possessed her late companion to take this most extraordinary step? What was Will to her that she would be willing to part with twenty thousand pounds to get him off his trial? Mrs. Charles had not yielded easily; she had been haughty and impertinent at first. But Miss Carr was not to be silenced. She spoke such words of truth, and placed Mrs. Charles's conduct and position in such an unpleasant light, that the little lady at last burst into tears, and consented, in exchange for the twenty thousand pounds, to plead with her father-in-law to let Will go free. If she succeeded, the cheque was to be handed over to her the next day.

She did succeed. Lord Goldtree refused to prosecute, and Will Cecil found him-

self a free man once more. At what cost he did not know for years after. He left England again. It was well for him that a little note reached him before he sailed. The experience of the last few weeks had done him no good. It had embittered him and made him more reckless than ever. Full of hate and anger against everybody, he would have returned to America and there gone back to the old courses which had been his ruin before he had had to work for his daily bread. But that little note saved him: it was so gentle, so pitiful, so earnest in its entreaty that he would conquer and not be conquered, that, as he read it, he vowed to himself that he would do his utmost to deserve her faith and trust.

Two long weary years went by. What they were to him no one ever knew. He never cared to speak of them afterwards, even to his nearest and dearest. The shame and degradation of that arrest seemed to cling to him through them; and with it all was a great home-sickness that he had never felt before. Something—a feeling which he would never allow himself to analyse—was always drawing him towards England.

But one day—at one of his darkest moments, when life seemed to have become unendurable for its loneliness and unsatisfied aching and weary shadow of dis-honour—news came to him. At first he could scarcely realise it. His brother Charles had been thrown in the hunting-field and mortally hurt. On his death-bed he made a confession. It was he who had forged the cheque. His brother, at the time, had such a bad name that it was easy to allow him to be suspected. No one, for an instant, had ever doubted Will's guilt. If he himself had ever had any suspicions, he kept them to himself. His life was so dark that one more shadow cast on it had seemed almost endurable, rather than that his father should have to bear one more pang in the guilt of his younger son. Charles was dead.

He had died bitterly repentant, and their father sent now for his elder son, entreating him to come back at once.

Will returned. He visited his father, who, in his gladness at receiving back his lost son, would have opposed no wish of his. But Will had made up his mind. In some strange way, a woman, of whom he knew so little, as the world calls know-

ing, had become the guardian angel of his soul. Without her, it seemed as if life would be impossible. So long as that dark shadow covered him, he would not ask her. Now that he was cleared, he would go to her. He found out that she was living at the old house at Bradford. Her relation had died, but she did not care to live at the grand place she had inherited. Some feeling, of which she kept the secret locked up in her heart, took her back to the old house. And every evening—summer or winter, in sunshine or rain—she would go down to the fence, and look up the lane, thinking of the man who had once come by that way.

One evening, as she stood leaning against it, feeling grey, and cold, and old, her face turned towards the setting sun, she heard the sound of a脚步. It was winter time. In two days it would be Christmas. The footsteps struck sharp and clear on the frosty road. She turned to look, and suddenly it seemed as if the crimson flush of the setting sun had tinted her cheeks, giving them back their youth and roundness. She stood still, looking at him. He came on, his face pale, but his eyes smiling, though it was a very grave smile. He reached the fence and stood just on the other side, opposite to her, as he had done long ago, when she was still but a child.

"My heart and soul are needing you," he said. "Will you satisfy me, to-night, as you did once, long ago, 'for sweet charity's sake'?"

She looked at him, her eyes filling slowly with tears, her lips trembling.

"I was young, then; I am growing old, now, and faded."

"You are beautiful to me, as you were that summer evening, long ago, when I thought you the loveliest vision man's eyes could rest on. Be my wife. I can ask you to-day. You have heard?"

"Yes—his wife told me. She is very unhappy."

"She will recover," he said, with a half-bitter laugh. Then he forgot the selfish, heartless woman who had been his brother's partner in the wrong done him. "But I want your answer."

She laid her hands in his. And with the glorious crimson light falling about them, they spoke of the love which was to strengthen and help them through all the coming life.



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